

2017 Packers Offensive Report Card

By Bob McGinn JANUARY 10th, 2018

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This is the first of a nine-part position-by-position series in which the 67 players on the Green Bay Packers' 53-man roster and injured-reserve lists at the end of the season are graded. Playing-time percentages are from offense and defense only.

WIDE RECEIVERS (7)

DAVANTE ADAMS (74.1%): Day-in, day-out he was the team's best player in training camp, and his striking development carried over into what became his finest season. Almost impossible to reroute in the bump zone because of his extremely quick feet and much improved release. Worked inside and outside equally well. Capable of beating elite cornerbacks on the full route tree. Competitive at the ball, makes acrobatic catches and isn't a bad blocker. Wasn't great after the catch (4.24-yard average, down from 4.81 last year) and had a team-high eight drops in a team-high 112 targeted throws. Has suffered three concussions in the last 1 ½ seasons, including two this season on illegal hits by linebackers Danny Trevathan of Chicago and Thomas Davis of Carolina. One day before the finale he signed a four-year, \$58 million extension to become the fourth highest-paid WR in the league. Grade: B+.

GERONIMO ALLISON (32.8%): Suspended for the opener (substance abuse), Allison came back to hold the No. 4 berth all season. In effect, he just treaded water in his second season. Played just two seasons of Division I football (Illinois) and his game still needs tightening. His late fumble in Carolina won't soon be forgotten. Can make breath-taking catches and has some pizzazz after the catch. Needs work on the little things. Towering possession receiver should benefit from the teaching of a veteran receivers coach like Jim Hostler. Grade: D+.

MICHAEL CLARK (7.2%): Project well worth another long look. Former Division I basketball player spent just two seasons on the football team at Marshall, redshirting one. Came on late in training camp and flourished on the practice squad before playing 75 snaps in the last two games. Perhaps was anointed too soon. Dropped two of 14 targets and really wasn't ready. Has good if not outstanding potential. At this point he's a screen-slant-takeoff-red zone receiver. Leggy at 6-5 ½, but has 4.53 speed. Grade: D.

RANDALL COBB (70.9%): Made it through an injury-free August and missed just one game (chest) due to injury. Not as dynamic in his seventh season as he once was. Certified tough guy has absorbed heavy punishment over the years. No longer lightning-quick off the line, doesn't separate as well at the break point and seldom runs away from tacklers in the open field. Still, he didn't drop a pass until Game 14. Since dropping a record 14 in 2015 he has just six drops in 195 targets the past two years. He led the team in average gain after the catch at 5.5, his best since 2014 and indicative of a player with some juice remaining in his legs. Lined up 39 times in the backfield, including four from "wildcat" formation. He's worthy of playing time in 2018 but at less than 50% of the \$8.6 million base salary in the final year of his contract. Grade: C+.

TREVOR DAVIS (9.8%): Added needed weight and strength between years one and two and blossomed into one of the NFL's leading return specialists. His 12.0-yard average on punts ranked third in the league, the Packers' best finish since Desmond Howard ran wild to be No. 1 in 1996. Assumed the kickoff job after 5 ½ games and tied for seventh at 22.8. Generally made sound decisions. Handled the ball on 77 returns without a fumble. As the only legitimate burner (4.41) on a slow-as-molasses corps of WRs he should have played much more than 103 snaps from scrimmage. The coaches failed Davis by not getting him on the field for Jordy Nelson. **Grade: B-.**

JEFF JANIS (4.8%): Encountered double-team blocking almost every week as opposing special-teams coaches refused to let Janis beat them. His tackle total of six was a far cry from the 15 he amassed in 2015. Played merely eight snaps from scrimmage in the first 14 games, and almost all of those came on the kneel-down team. Logged 42 in Games 15-16, making one nice reception and dropping a bang-bang post in Detroit that probably was a touchdown. It's obvious that Mike McCarthy has no use for Janis as a wide receiver. Still, he should be able to carve out a nice niche for himself here or elsewhere because wide receivers with his speed-toughness-tackling ability often last a long time. **Grade: C-.**

JORDY NELSON (77%): Didn't do anything in training camp, exhibition games or in 806 snaps. The only judgment, at 32 and in his 10th season, is that Nelson has hit the proverbial wall. Lived on his six TD passes from Aaron Rodgers in the first five games to elude scrutiny over his ongoing collapse. Other than a 32-yard "free" play against the unsuspecting Seahawks, his TD passes measured 1, 3, 4, 8 and 10 yards. Never caught another in what was by far his poorest season. Rodgers' injury was just a convenient excuse. He couldn't beat press coverage or separate downfield. He also developed a disturbing habit of falling down for little or no reason when the ball arrived. His average gain after the catch of 2.30 was the lowest of his career; on 67.9% of his 53 catches he gained two or fewer yards post-catch. Of all WRs with 25 or more receptions, Nelson ranked third worst in yards per catch at 9.1. Late in the season his hands and blocking deserted him, too. His long catch from Game 6 on was 17 yards. After averaging 20.7 receptions for 20 or more yards in his last three full seasons Nelson had four in 2017. There's no reason to bring Nelson back for the final year of his contract at \$9.25 million base salary. If the Packers think his legs are gone, release him. **Grade: D-.**

TIGHT ENDS (3)

EMANUEL BYRD (1.1%): When the Packers needed a second body at the position he came off an eight-week stint on the practice squad to play 11 snaps in the finale. When the Lions paid no attention to Byrd in the flat, his 29-yard reception was longer than all but one of the heralded Martellus Bennett's 24 catches. Byrd lacks the size (6-2, 240), speed (4.65), athleticism (33 5/8 inches) and intelligence (13 on the Wonderlic intelligence test) to be a legitimate prospect. **Grade: Incomplete.**

LANCE KENDRICKS (44.6%): The Packers plucked the Milwaukee native off the street in March for a song (two years, \$4 million, \$1.2M guaranteed). The price was right but the production and performance weren't. Kendrick started 79 games (204 receptions) for the Rams from 2011-'16 but at this point he's just a second or third tight end. His blocking was better than Jared Cook's but he wasn't in the same hemisphere as a receiver. In fact, he wasn't a threat at all, showing minimal speed and quickness in and out of his cuts. He led the tight ends in "bad" runs with six, one-half more than Richard Rodgers and twice Bennett's total before he was discarded after 37% playing time. Kendrick's drop rate of 13.8% (four of 29) was only slightly better than the butter-fingered Bennett (16.7%, six of 36). At a soon-to-be 30, he might be a band-aid for another year. **Grade: D+.**

RICHARD RODGERS (29.2%): Mired as No. 3 until Bennett's ride on the gravy train ended after Game 7, Rodgers was No. 2 until passing up Kendricks with a month to go. Kendricks played 45.4% of his snaps in a three-point stance compared to 42.8% for Rodgers and 31.8% for Bennett. Rodgers is a sleeker-looking athlete having lost weight over time but it hasn't been reflected by his playing speed. He's still that 4.87 40 or thereabouts with good but not great hands (seven drops in 65 drops the past two years). Moreover, he's a below-average blocker. Now might be the time for the Packers to move on (his contract expired) and force themselves to get better. **Grade: D+.**

OFFENSIVE LINE (12)

DAVID BAKHTIARI (72.0%): The arc of Bakhtiari's career is reflected in his total of pressures, which is defined here as the combination of sacks, knockdowns and hurries allowed. Starting with his rookie season of 2013, he has yielded 37, 33, 17, 19 and 17 ½ pressures in 2017. Part of the decline this season was due to reduced playing time. A hamstring injury cost him about 300 snaps this year. More to the point, he's become bigger, stronger and generally better at his craft each year. Bakhtiari (6-4 ½, 315) lacks aircraft-carrier size for the position, which can be slightly limiting when measured against the great ones. He is light on his feet, tenacious, technique-oriented and confident. His career totals for "bad" runs (defined as runs for 1 yard or less excluding successful short-yardage and goal-line plays) also reflect improvement. Beginning with 2013, his totals are 15 ½, 19 ½, eight, nine and six in 2017. A good comparable for Bakhtiari is Matt Light (6-4 ½, 310), a second-round pick with a good Wonderlic score (28, Bakhtiari's was 25) who started 153 games at LT for New England from 2001-'11 and made one Pro Bowl. **Grade: A-.**

BRYAN BULAGA (22.2%): His future will be a hot topic of discussion leading up to the start of free agency and the league year on March 14. When the Packers re-signed Bulaga for five years on the eve of free agency in 2015 they gambled he could put injuries behind him. Alas, he couldn't. In 2016, injuries forced Bulaga to leave four games but he did manage to play all 16 for just the second time in his career. This year, he missed three games with an ankle injury and then the last eight with a second torn ACL. He has now missed 46 games in seven seasons due to injury. What do the Packers do with Bulaga and his remaining base salaries of \$5.85 million in 2018 and \$5.8M in '19? They probably bring him back because Kyle Murphy and Jason Spriggs suffered major injuries, too, and aren't even close to being as good. This offense has operated much more efficiently when Bulaga was in the lineup. When Bulaga did play this season, he was so-so. **Grade: C-.**

DILLON DAY (0.0%): Plucked off Denver's practice squad with 10 days left in the season. Entered the NFL as undrafted rookie with the Broncos in 2015. He has spent three games on 53-man rosters, including one with Denver and two with Indianapolis this season, but has never played a down. He'll be reunited with Joe Philbin, the Colts' offensive line coach this year. Day (6-4, 296, 5.23) started 46 of 51 games at center for Mississippi State from 2011-'14. In early 2015, he scored 19 on the Wonderlic, bench-pressed just 23 times, had 33 ¾-inch arms and small hands 9 1/8. "Quality backup," said one scout. "Technician. Little small, but he makes up for it with his hands and feet." **Grade: Incomplete.**

JAHRI EVANS (87.1%): The Packers caught a break when Evans, at age 34 and in his 12th season, was able to play every snap for 14 games before a bad knee shut him down for Games 15-16. His first and presumably only season in Green Bay epitomized stopgap. Way late on the trigger, GM Ted Thompson was lucky Evans remained available the day before the draft and that he accepted \$2.25 million for one year. Evans' halcyon days in New Orleans are long gone. He remained combative. He tried to win by engulfing defenders with his mass. Size was his primary attribute. Evans led the team in pressures allowed (28 ½) and "bad" runs (15 ½). If the quarterback was knocked down, he cared and helped him up. One reason why the screen game suffered was Evans' lack of speed and agility. It seemed at times as if Evans was short-circuiting against stunts and movement, but his miscues were due more to an inability to move laterally, bend and pick people up. If the Packers need another band-aid, they could do worse than even the 35-year-old Evans. **Grade: D+.**

ULRICK JOHN (3.8%): When multiple tackles went down John was signed off the Cardinals' practice squad on Sept. 26. Two weeks later more injuries left him as the last man standing at RT for the final 32 snaps against the Vikings in Minneapolis. It was a turkey (sack) shoot, to say the least, with John yielding three of his four pressures to veteran Brian Robison. His other eight snaps came as an extra tight end. He's not a bad athlete but his strength limitations were evident. John has been around (four clubs) and does have long arms (34 ½), but no team would ever count on him. **Grade: D-.**

COREY LINSLEY (100%): He was the only player on the roster to play all of his platoon's snaps. Linsley is far more than just a snap-eater, of course, which is why management gave him a three-year, \$25.5 million extension on Dec. 30. He isn't knocking people around much but makes sound decisions and runs a solid line. Conscientious and competent, Linsley recognizes defenses and usually makes quick, proper adjustments. He isn't an explosive run blocker. He had a career-high total of 15 "bad" runs, up from 8 ½ last year. He does get outmanned at times against big men, and he isn't a top athlete, either. He is relatively quick, understands leverage, effectively down blocks on gap plays and very seldom just flat misses in one-on-one protection. Just one-half of his 14 ½ pressures was a sack. He helps the guards by looking for work in pass pro. **Grade: B.**

JUSTIN McCRAY (56.7%): He might have been the biggest surprise of the season. Thompson signed him off the street March 29 after two failed trials in Tennessee and a stint in indoor football. The Titans told me he was a great kid but just didn't move well enough. A guard by trade, he beat out draft pick Kofi Amichia and talented Canadian Geoff Gray by going the distance at center in the exhibition finale to prove his versatility. McCray ended up playing four positions although center wasn't one of them. His snap counts were 32 at LT, 130 at LG, one at RG, 422 at RT and nine at TE. He deserved admiration for maximizing his ability. A limited athlete, he moved his feet well enough to survive outside and used his strength (32 reps on the bench) and bulk to hold up inside. Regardless of the position, McCray kept his cool, applied his intelligence (Wonderlic of 30) and performed functionally. Not that he didn't have a slew of awful plays, especially in protection. He did, allowing 28 pressures, second most behind Evans. His 5.5 40 didn't help the screen game, either. His "bad" run total of five, however, was impressive. Bad body or not, McCray came through when the Packers needed it most. **Grade: C.**

KYLE MURPHY (21.8%): Promising second-year tackle was cut down by a season-ending foot injury in late September. Making his first start on opening day at RT against DEs Cliff Avril and Michael Bennett of Seattle, Murphy struggled but never to the point of embarrassment. Moving to LT the next Sunday in Atlanta, he held up better than expected against DEs Adrian Clayborn and Takk McKinley. He played all 70 snaps the next week against Cincinnati, allowing four of his five pressures to rookie Carl Lawson. Two were sacks as Lawson destroyed him inside. At some point, Murphy suffered the foot damage that was reported the next day and ended his season. Feet, balance, athleticism and intelligence (Wonderlic of 29) are his best traits. However, he must get a lot stronger. **Grade: C-.**

ADAM PANKEY (0.0%): Three days after the opener the Packers cut DT Ricky Jean Francois and promoted Pankey from the practice squad. He proceeded to be inactive 10 times in 15 games, logging one snap on special teams in the finale. At 6-4 ½ and 313, Pankey probably is better suited for guard than tackle. In August, he did flash enough promise to be in the mix at several positions next season. He has large hands (10 5/8), solid arm length (34), enough intelligence (Wonderlic of 22) and three years of experience starting at LT and LG for West Virginia. **Grade: Incomplete.**

LUCAS PATRICK (21.7%): Depending what happens in the draft and free agency Patrick might have a shot to start at RG in his third season. After opening his rookie season on the practice squad, Patrick somewhat surprisingly made the team and ended up playing 93 snaps at LG and 134 at RG. He played well against Chicago and the second Minnesota game, was so-so in the first Minnesota game and finished poorly in Detroit. At some point Patrick came up with a damaged right hand that forced him to play Games 15-16 with a large protective club. He suffered a major hand injury as a rookie, too. Patrick basically tries to kill people. He barges around, mauling and brawling in high-energy style. He's a better athlete than McCray but isn't as brawny. He allowed too many pressures (nine) but just one "bad" run. **Grade: D+.**

JASON SPRIGGS (26.6%): Made minimal, if any progress in his second season after an awful rookie year. This second-round draft choice needs to avail himself of his third-year chance or that will be all she wrote. Spriggs missed nine games with a hamstring injury suffered blocking for an extra point on his first play of the season. Upon his return he couldn't have played worse in 22 snaps off the bench Nov. 19 against the Ravens. Went the distance at RT in Games 11-14 before suffering a season-ending dislocated kneecap in Game 15. After displaying some improvement in Games 11-12, he was terrible in Cleveland and fell apart in the fourth quarter in Carolina. It's as if the athleticism that he had coming out of Indiana is in remission. He bends at the waist, loses his balance and can't seem to protect the inside. As a run blocker, he's inconsistent coming off the ball, following assignments and sustaining. Spriggs finished with 17 pressures, three more than last year, and seven "bad" runs, one-half less than in 2016. **Grade: F.**

LANE TAYLOR (89.7%): Improved in his second season as a starter. Played way out of position at LT against Chicago and Dallas but found a way to make it work and the Packers went 2-0. It was remarkable to see him functioning on an island given his short arms (31 ¾) and marginal athletic ability. Taylor's a get-it-done type of guy. He's tough, hard-nosed and won't ever lay down. He shouldn't be effective as a pull blocker but at the end of the season he was the team's best puller. He puts his big, thick body to work covering up defenders. Uses his large mitts (10 3/8) to assist him in a hands-outside style of pass blocking. Allowed 21 ½ pressures, seven fewer than a year ago, and nine "bad" runs, four fewer than in 2016. Penalized five times last season, Taylor didn't have any this season. The last starting O-lineman in Green Bay to go through a season without an accepted penalty was C Scott Wells in 2008. **Grade: B-.**

QUARTERBACKS (3)

JOE CALLAHAN (0.7%): Mike McCarthy has a thing about Callahan. He surely played a role in signing him as an undrafted rookie from Wesley (Del.) College two years ago, placed him on the 53-man roster for 11 weeks last season and then nine weeks this season. Even when Callahan was less effective this summer than last summer, McCarthy made sure he was on the practice squad to start the season. Callahan has excellent eyes and a penchant for making something out of nothing. He's also short (6-1) and slow (4.98), doesn't have much arm talent and is maybe as good as he's going to get. If a player isn't good enough, what's the sense in keeping him around? **Grade: Incomplete.**

BRETT HUNDLEY (59.4%): After not playing a meaningful snap in his first two seasons Hundley made nine starts and played 9 7/8 games. He won three of his nine starts and was 3-7 as the quarterback of record. He finished 30th in passer rating (70.6) after a sluggish exhibition season in which he also finished 30th (88.8). Hundley demonstrated a steady pattern of improvement until regressing in his last two starts. He played with remarkable poise, refused to fluster and at least attempted to execute the offense. He earned plaudits from coaches and teammates alike for his commitment, work habits, arm strength and leadership. He ran for 270 yards, both scrambling and on designed runs, 10th most among quarterbacks. On the other hand, he demonstrated a glaring lack of accuracy (60.8%), an inability to work through a two- and three-receiver progression and minimal presence in the pocket. He often bolted prematurely and then, time after time, drifted to his right and ended up tossing the ball out of bounds. He had too many interceptions (12), lost two fumbles and squandered an excessive number of timeouts. Despite criticism that at times was over the top he seemed to remain confident even though McCarthy did him few favors by not tailoring the offense to his strengths. He directed come-from-behind victories over Tampa Bay and Cleveland, feats that repeatedly eluded Aaron Rodgers in his first season as a starter (2008). His best performance probably came in the 31-28 defeat at Pittsburgh as a 14-point underdog. He was awful against the Vikings (twice), Saints, Ravens, and Lions. It's entirely possible no team would want Hundley as No. 1. Given his wheels and new-found seasoning, many teams probably would like him as No. 2. **Grade: C-.**

AARON RODGERS (39.9%): Was off to a solid start and the Packers were 4-1 when he suffered a broken right collarbone on the eighth offensive snap of the sixth game of the year in Minnesota. The team's fortunes drooped without him. On the legal hit by Anthony Barr, Rodgers simply misjudged the big linebacker's blazing speed and held the ball a count too long. It wasn't one of his frequent daredevil plays this season and in the past in which he almost invited hits and punishment. In his poorest game of the season, Rodgers held the ball so long (5.1 seconds) from his own end zone in the last minute of a blowout defeat in Atlanta that DE Adrian Clayborn had time to deliver a bone-jarring blow that was a much tougher hit than Barr's. He dusted himself off after Clayborn but his luck ran out after Barr. At 34, and entering his 14th season, Rodgers holds the team's fate in his hands every time he decides to take on unnecessary contact. His injury resume includes a torn ACL in high school, a fractured foot in 2006, two concussions in 2010, a broken collarbone in 2013, a pair of calf injuries in 2014 and arthroscopic knee surgery in January 2016. With the season on the line, Rodgers returned to start Game 14 in Carolina and was at fault on his three interceptions in a crushing defeat. Described as "sore," the decision was made that he wouldn't play in what became lopsided losses to the Vikings and Lions. **Grade: B.**

RUNNING BACKS (6)

AARON JONES (22.5%): If the Packers knew how good Jones was in August it made no sense to start an inferior running back in Ty Montgomery. Fortunately for the coaches, Montgomery didn't last long and Jones got 236 snaps to show he was one of the two most explosive players on offense. There are a lot of terrific players among the NFL's top 50 rushers but only two (Russell Wilson at 6.2, Alvin Kamara at 6.1) posted a better average per carry than Jones' 5.5. Jones might have threatened 1,000 yards (he finished with 448) were it not for knee sprains in Game 9 and Game 15 that abbreviated his season. Jones is somewhat undersized at 5-9 ½, 208 but plays bigger than that. He's a slasher who gets to top speed in a hurry and hits the hole going full-bore. He's no dancer, either. He puts his foot in the ground on zone plays and heads north-south decisively. Of the eight rushes for 20 yards or more by RBs, Jones had six. He played faster than his 4.58. Conversely, of the 12 pressures yielded by RBs, Jones gave up six. That can't continue. He did impress as a receiver, running routes from the perimeter easily and catching all 14 balls thrown his way. **Grade: C+.**

JOE KERRIDGE (0.3%): When Aaron Ripkowski struggled much of the season the Packers protected themselves at the time and for next season by re-signing Kerridge. In two seasons Kerridge has been on the 53 for 15 games and played a total of 24 snaps. He's a harder hitter working straight-ahead as a blocker than Ripkowski. In training camp, Kerridge also showed surprising catch radius and soft hands handling check-downs in the flat. At 4.88, Kerridge is considerably slower than Ripkowski (4.74), and that looms large on special teams. However, he's equally as intelligent (30 on the Wonderlic) and just as athletic. **Grade: Incomplete.**

DEVANTE MAYS (1.3%): It's impossible to say where his career might be headed. Some days in August Mays looked to be as talented if not more so than Aaron Jones. At 5-10 ½ and close to 230 his build typifies the modern-day power runner. Yet, the coaches didn't even put him in a game until Nov. 19. One day after the Packers made Mays the 22nd tailback drafted an NFL personnel director said his team liked Mays' level of ability a lot but were scared off by what they perceived to be his mental shortcomings. As if on cue, Mays ran the wrong play on his first snap from scrimmage, almost fumbled on the exchange and then did fumble a few steps later. When McCarthy gave him another shot late in that blowout loss against the Ravens, he fumbled again. Banished until the finale, Mays didn't look comfortable catching three check-downs for no gain. Of course, he had just two receptions at Utah State. **Grade: F.**

TY MONTGOMERY (26.2%): Mike McCarthy and his offensive coaches were paid well over \$10 million this year to know things like if a wide receiver can make a successful conversion to running back, the position he played infrequently in high school and college. They made a costly blunder here. Montgomery looked fine in August when people were playing "thud" football, not tackle football. When the rough stuff started he didn't last long. At some point in Game 3 Montgomery suffered a wrist injury that led to surgery in early December. There also were damaged ribs and other injuries that knocked him out of several games and completely out of the last 7 ½. At 225 pounds and with a shredded physique, Montgomery looks the part. He just never experienced the years of pounding that NFL RBs need to stand the test of time. His best chance now would be a move back to slot receiver-gadget guy-kickoff returner. He does have superb hands (four drops in 111 targets for career) and open-field run skill. **Grade: D.**

AARON RIPKOWSKI (17.3%): Ripkowski created a niche for himself in 2016 when injuries gave him extensive snaps in one-back looks by default. That went away this season and so Ripkowski went back to being a one-dimensional fullback, the type of player that Mike McCarthy determined he could function without. Ripkowski is not a fullback that can drop his hips and dig out a linebacker. There aren't many that can, but in the off-season it can be expected that the Packers will try to replace him. If you're going to carry a fullback, you need more of a thumper and a better player on special teams. **Grade: D.**

JAMAAL WILLIAMS (42.3%): The coaches believed in Williams even though his Game 1-8 production was so minimal (11-34). Overly concerned with ball security, he looked to be in a straight-jacket with two arms enveloping the ball. With Jones and Montgomery all but done for the season, Williams opened up his running style when duty called and was a pleasant if not dramatic surprise. In the last eight games he averaged 17.8 carries for 65.3 yards while adding 262 yards in 25 receptions. Almost every college scout said he ran tough at Brigham Young, and he did the same thing in Green Bay. He can find a hole, dip his pads and wear out defensive backs. He brought it down after down. In 178 touches he never fumbled. His deficiencies, however, are fairly well defined. Minimally elusive, he seldom breaks a tackle. With 4.54 speed, he won't outrun many defenders. In the passing game, his blocking was adequate but his receiving was just so-so. His five drops (in 32 targets, a drop rate of 15.6% second on the team behind Martellus Bennett's 16.7%) were the most by a RB in Green Bay since Ahman Green dropped eight (63 targets) in 2006. Williams' zest for contact also was amply evident on special teams in the first two months. **Grade: B-**